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SUBJECT: MALIKI ON CONCERNED LOCAL CITIZENS, STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP DECLARATION, AND LARGE-SCALE DETAINEE AMNESTY

Classified By: Political Military Minister-Counselor Marcie Ries for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: During a weekly security meeting, Prime Minister Maliki emphasized the primacy of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and local police in maintaining law-and-order. He expressed concern about the sectarian composition of many Concerned Local Citizens (CLC) groups and urged future CLC expansion include both Sunni and Shia members with a focus on mixed neighborhoods. Lieutenant General Odierno assured Prime Minister Maliki that the CF would not allow the CLCs to become a threat to the government. General Odierno and Maliki agreed that security in Sadr City was improving due to positive involvement of local citizens, but more needed to be done. Regarding the Strategic Partnership Declaration, Maliki said he wanted a simple document with clearly stated principles. Maliki informed General Odierno about his decision to grant amnesty to a large number of Iraqi-held detainees and urged MNF-I to do the same. END SUMMARY.

CLCs Are Not a Threat

¶2. (S) Discussions about CLCs dominated the weekly security meeting on November 10 with Prime Minister Maliki, Commanding General Multi-National Corps Iraq (MNC-I) Odierno, and Political Military Minister Counselor Ries. Lieutenant General Odierno opened the meeting by assuring PM Maliki that Coalition Forces (CF) would not allow these local, neighborhood-watch groups to become a threat to the national government. General Odierno also expressed concern that people with malevolent intent were trying to drive a wedge between the government and the Multi-National Forces in Iraq (MNF-I) by spreading unfounded rumors about CF goals regarding the CLCs.

Maliki Fears Sectarian-based CLCs

¶3. (S) Prime Minister Maliki dismissed these rumors saying Iraqis love conspiracy theories. He emphasized that the Iraqi people owed a debt of gratitude to the CF for liberating them from a terrible dictator, but some groups still opposed the democratically elected government. In this regard, Maliki expressed concern that CLC groups were growing in numbers so rapidly that they could become a lucrative target for extremist infiltration. If that occurred, he feared it would lead to resurgence in sectarian bloodshed.

¶4. (S) General Odierno pointed out that the 67,000 CLC members who have already volunteered are necessary because these people live in areas without CF or ISF protection. He noted that MNF-I was not arming them--they already had

weapons--but was primarily helping them organize effective neighborhood watch programs. General Odierno emphasized that MNF-I strictly vetted all CLC applicants--including collection of biometric data--and that the applicant lists are forwarded to the government.

CLCs: Security Necessity or Jobs Program?

¶ 15. (S) Maliki advised caution in expanding this program. He assessed that many of these applicants were looking for jobs, not security, since many new CLC groups were forming in areas with little or no violence. He asked General Odierno if there was a map showing all current and proposed CLCs which might verify this assessment. Maliki added that security was the responsibility of the government and expressed pleasure that CLC groups in Anbar province were now integrating into the ISF. He lamented this might not be possible in other provinces which already had adequate numbers of police. Maliki praised Ambassador Crocker's recent proposal for a large-scale vocational training program as an alternative which could absorb many of these unemployed youth. The Prime Minister also expressed concern at reports that some CLC groups had recently prevented displaced Iraqi citizens from returning to their homes. He said this raised doubts as to their true nature and purpose.

¶ 16. (S) General Odierno answered that he had personally visited many of these neighborhoods and the security concerns of the local citizens were real. He reiterated that Coalition Forces only helped establish CLCs in areas with inadequate numbers of government security forces. General Odierno agreed to provide the Prime Minister with a map showing CLC locations and expressed confidence it would confirm this

BAGHDAD 00003721 002 OF 002

assessment. He assured the Prime Minister that CLC members caught breaking the law against displaced citizens--or in any other fashion--would be arrested by the CF and turned over to the Iraqi authorities. General Odierno also agreed that a vocational training program would provide unemployed Iraqi youth was an essential alternative to violent activity.

Non-Sectarian CLC Success in Baghdad

¶ 17. (S) Maliki concluded this discussion by saying he was not against CLC groups per se, but against those with unbalanced sectarian composition. He noted the great success in Baghdad of CLC groups which had mixed religious composition, especially in the southern neighborhood of Jihad. The Prime Minister urged General Odierno to focus CLC expansion in mixed neighborhoods and make sure their composition was balanced. General Odierno agreed and called these non-sectarian CLCs the most promising way-ahead for Baghdad.

Improved Sadr City Security

¶ 18. (S) Both Prime Minister Maliki and General Odierno agreed that the time was right to work with local leaders in Sadr City to improve the security environment. General Odierno noted that he recently provided the government with the identities of six individuals in Sadr City who were intimidating local citizens against cooperating with MNF-I. He said he was pleased to report that recent intelligence reports confirmed that at least three, maybe more, had immediately fled the country when the government and local citizens groups chased them out. General Odierno urged Maliki to arrest the remaining leaders of Jaysh al-Mahki (JAM) Special Groups in Sadr City and work with local leaders to improve security there. Maliki promised to hunt down the rest with the renewed help of local Sadr City leaders, and noted he had an ongoing "project" under negotiation with the Sadrist leaders there (note: Maliki did not elaborate further, end note).

Strategic Partnership Declaration

¶ 9. (S) Turning to negotiations on the Security Partnership Declaration (SPD), the PolMilCoun told the Prime Minister that she appreciated the cooperative spirit of the ongoing discussions and expressed hope they would soon have a mutually agreed document. Maliki concurred and said he wanted the SPD to be a simple and clear statement of principles. He added that it should not contain excessive details which might blur its meaning and could be negotiated later. Maliki said that lawyers from both sides must work closely together to ensure the language is unambiguous. PolMilCoun said she would work to make it as simple as possible, but still carry forward all the principles of the August 27 statement made by the Iraqi political leadership.

Maliki Proposes Wide-Ranging Amnesty Program

¶ 10. (S) Prime Minister Maliki advised General Odierno that he had decided to release a large number of detainees held by the Iraqi government as part of a wide-ranging amnesty program, but he had not yet resolved the timing. The Prime Minister added that this would be an important step in national reconciliation. He urged General Odierno to consider a nearly simultaneous release of detainees held by the MNF-I who did not pose a threat. General Odierno said this would require a comprehensive review of detainee records, which could take some time. Maliki said he understood, but asked the General to move as quickly as possible in this direction (note: while the exact mix of Iraqi-held detainees is unknown, about 85% of MNF-I detainees are Sunni, end note.)

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